



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ART NEEDLEWORK

THE ART OF EMBROIDERY.



I. SINCE the revival of embroidery, initiated by the Royal School of Art-Needlework about eleven years ago in England, it has risen so rapidly and spread so widely that it is difficult to find any person now completely ignorant of the art. Like all other arts, however, it suffers from the widespread

idea among amateurs that any one can do it who may have the taste for it, and that it requires no special training. They are perfectly satisfied with their own crude efforts, and their friends flatter them into the belief that these are equal to the productions of professional embroiderers. Nothing is to be said against these ladies filling their leisure hours with an employment which is perfectly harmless, but it would give much more satisfaction to themselves, and much less pain to others, if they would devote some little time to studying embroidery as an art, and trying to produce what is artistically good.

The following instructions, it is hoped, will be of practical value to all amateur embroiderers. It is proposed to start from the very commencement and go on gradually to the most advanced stitches and modes of working, giving illustrations and adopting the names and classifications in use at the Royal School in London.

Embroidery stitches have been classified by Dr. Rock into three groups—or perhaps I should say four. And it will be well to keep to these divisions. First, there is the very simple and almost primitive style of decoration, appliqué, where the design is cut out in one material and sewn on to the ground of another; this is mentioned first, but will be treated last of all. The old term for this was “opus consutum,” or cut work. Second, the large class of stitches which are regulated by the threads of the canvas on or over which they are worked, the “opus pulvinarium,” or cushion-stitch of olden times. Third, embroidery—

with which the ancient embroideries were executed. Fine gold and silver were too precious to be lavished on the back of a piece of embroidery, and therefore we always find them “laid” on the surface.

I shall treat first of the third and fourth classes, as being so much more important than the first two, and shall return to these later.

The first stitch to learn in embroidery, properly so called, is what is known as stem-stitch. It is the foundation of almost all others, and everything de-

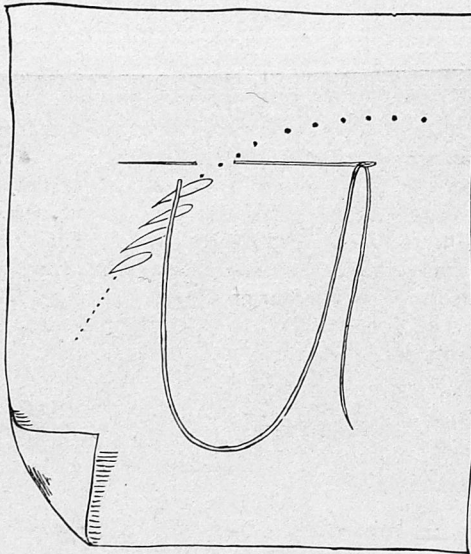


FIG. 1. STEM-STITCH.

pends on the worker gaining perfect facility in this first step before trying anything more advanced. And here I may say that it is important to ascertain the right size of needle. I shall, for simplicity's sake, suppose the worker to use only crewel while learning, and to embroider on linen as being the easiest to learn upon. The linen should be soft and entirely without dressing. Hand-made is the best, but as that can very rarely be obtained, a good even machine-made linen must be selected. No. 5 of Kirby Beard's embroidery needles will be about the best size. The linen must be held over the middle fingers of the left hand, and the needle should be run in a backward direction along the design to commence with, so as to avoid a knot—a thing which must never be heard of in embroidery, except when used as a decoration. The needleful must not be too long or it will twist and waste; the skein of crewel cut into two will be about right. The stitches are taken in a direction away from the worker, or from left to right, and should be as even as possible.

Stem-stitch consists of a long stitch on the surface of the material and a short one on the back, taken in a straight line, as shown in the accompanying sketch, or at a slight angle, if the worker is embroidering a leaf with a slightly serrated edge. In an ordinary way the point of the needle is brought out just below the point where the last thread left the material so as to produce the appearance of a slight twist; but one variety of stem-stitch is done by keeping the needle absolutely straight and bringing it up each time *through* the last thread, so as to split it. This is called split-stitch and is useful when a very straight line is needed in outlining. It is, properly speaking, however, a frame-stitch.

In working a leaf it is necessary to begin at the stalk end and work round the right side to the top, keeping the needle at a slight angle and leaving the thread always at the right side. When the tip of the leaf is reached the operation should be reversed, and the thread kept to the left of the needle in returning down the left side to the stalk. This is necessary so as to keep the direction or lay of the stitches pointing toward the extremity of the leaf on both sides of the edge.

It is best for the learner to confine herself to working in outline only until she is quite perfect in this stitch, so that she does it mechanically and quite evenly, whether with a longish, loose stitch or a fine one. When she is quite sure of herself she may begin to fill in or work solidly. This must be done by taking a second row of stem-stitch inside the other to the tip of the leaf. A very little experience will show how much better an effect is produced if the needle is taken out in the second row half way between the other stitches—where the dots are marked in the sketch. Much greater evenness is obtained in this way. The two halves of the leaf must be filled up separately, with close, even rows of stem-stitch worked in the ordinary way, with the thread to the right of the needle. Otherwise the worker will find an ugly ridge in the centre of the leaf.

The worker should now practise working plain stem-stitch and split-stitch in all directions so as to acquire skill in turning sharply or in working round and round, which is often needed for fruit. A little experience will show her the best length of stitch to take. In working curves they must not be very long; but in filled-in work a long, loose stitch is sometimes best if very evenly done.

Later on I shall speak of the principles of decorative art, but it is enough to say here that except under certain circumstances decorative work should be conventional. For instance, let us suppose that the worker is about to embroider for her first effort a chair or sofa-back cover on linen. The design selected should be a wholly conventional one; but if one containing natural leaves and flowers is chosen, they should be treated as conventionally as possible. Thus the leaves should not be shaded to imitate nature, but worked in flat tones, with no more variety than is needed to produce a pleasing effect of light and shade. The petals of the flowers also should be treated in the same manner, although a little more license is permitted with them. If the work is intended to be framed, as a cabinet panel or screen, it may be worked in natural colors and to represent nature.

But here a word or two is necessary at the outset. Nothing is more common than for an inexperienced worker to make the same mistake as an amateur paint-

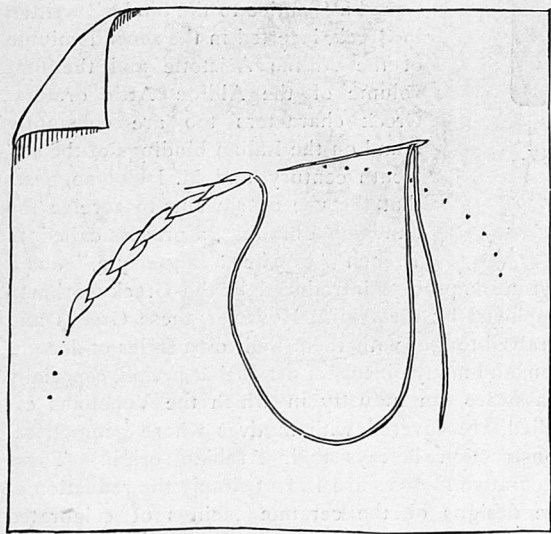


FIG. 2. SPLIT-STITCH.

properly so called—embracing an enormous number of stitches worked on any ground that may be selected, and in which the needle is passed through the material. Fourth, laid work, or couching, under which head come all the gold stitches used in ecclesiastical work. It is so called because the silk or gold thread used is all laid on the surface of the ground-work, and nothing appears at the back but the fastening stitches. The origin of this stitch was evidently the effort to avoid wasting any of the precious material

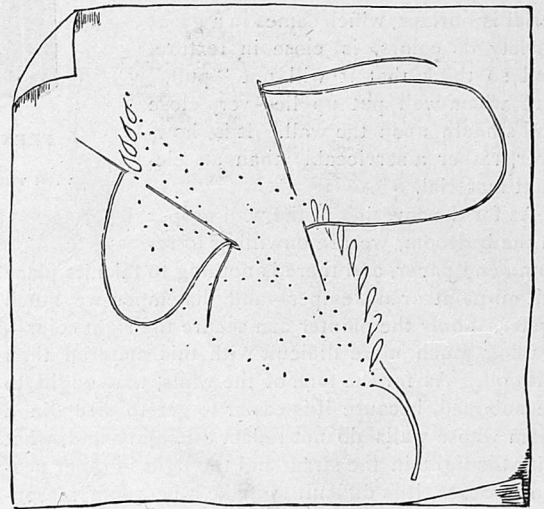


FIG. 3. STEM-STITCH EDGE.

er, who, because he knows that trees are green paints them so, and produces nothing in the least like nature. He needs much observation to show him that the trees he is looking at in the distance are anything but green—perhaps blue, perhaps a brownish purple—and so with embroidery. Poppies are bright scarlet, and corn-flowers blue, and so nothing is commoner than to see unrelieved patches of glaring red and vivid blue, which make one instinctively close one's eyes, and which are like nothing that nature ever painted. Per-

haps the best cure for this mistake is to take the brightest colored flower that exists and lay it beside your wools. You will find that it contains a hundred different lights and shades which tone it down, and that these require to be most carefully taken into account in selecting your coloring. It is better to err on the side of dulness; for a couple of stitches will give all the brightness that is necessary afterward.

L. HIGGIN.

HOW TO PAINT ON CHINA.

II.—COLORS AND THEIR PREPARATION FOR USE.

A GREAT variety of paints can be bought for china painting. Printed lists may be obtained from any of

Gray violet of iron,
Yellow for mixing,
Orange yellow,

Silver yellow,
Flux,

These colors can be procured in tubes already mixed with fat oil, or in powders. There are several very beautiful colors in the Hancock list. Among these are:

Blue (for old tile painting),
Vandyck brown,
Chestnut brown,
Rose-leaf green,

Shading green,
Orange (light),
Pink,
Rose,

These are in bottles in powder. All the colors in the list are good.

For painting in monochrome or one color, deep ultramarine, brown 4 or 17, and deep red brown are especially good. If the young amateur desires a still narrower range than has been already given, let me suggest

Deep ultramarine,
Brown 4 or 17.
Light carmine.
Crimson lake.
Grass green.

Dark green No. 7.
Yellow ochre.
Capucine red.
Silver yellow.

With these nine colors (and flux) a great deal of good painting can be done. I will endeavor to show how they may be combined to produce good effects. There are still other colors used for grounds which will not bear mixing with other paints. These are useful, and certain to fire well if properly manipulated. There are twenty-four of these colors in the list. The few that I have tried have been my preference in regard to color. They are:

Celestial blue,
Lavender blue,
Celadon,
Fusible lilac,

Maize,
Salmon,
Turquoise green,

When you are ready to actually begin painting, select your position beside the window, the light coming from your left side. Draw up the curtain, and give yourself an abundance of light. A north or east light is to be preferred. Never allow the sunlight upon your work. Let the table be horizontal, just high enough to prevent stooping; your chair also high and standing firm. Pour a small tumbler one third full of turpentine, still less of alcohol in another glass, and a teaspoonful of lavender oil in a sauce-dish. Spread the paints, brushes, palette, and knife before you, and put the essential oils at your right hand.

Wash the china with soap and water, and dry perfectly. You have selected your design, and have it and the china before you. Now wind a bit of rag on your forefinger, and press it to the mouth of the fat oil bottle. A drop or two will adhere; then dip the same finger in the turpentine, just enough to moisten the rag; now rub the surface of the china where the design is to be placed. A thin film will be formed, only to be perceived by holding the china sideways to the light. If you choose, you can place the article a moment or two on any heated surface, and it will be perfectly dry. Five minutes will dry it, in any event.

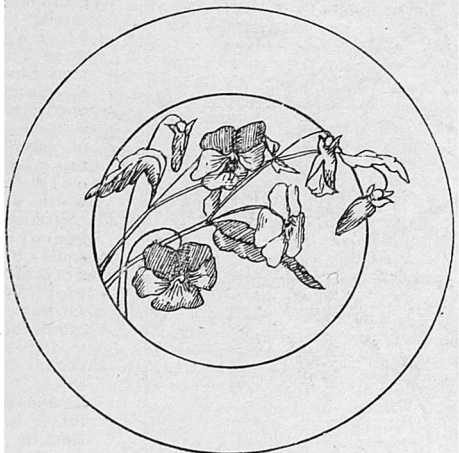
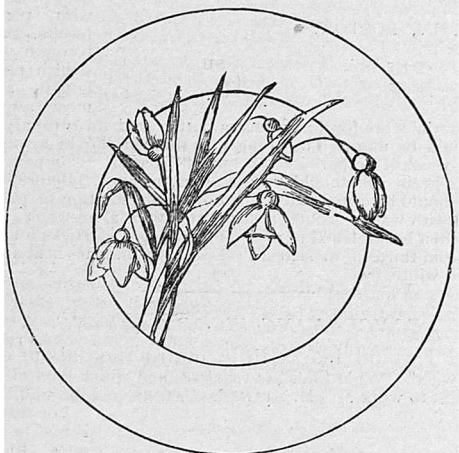
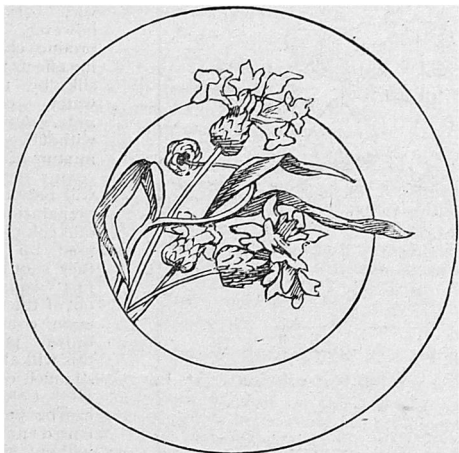
It will be much better for the painting if you will draw the design in pencil upon the china. An H pencil is the best for this use. If it is quite impossible for you to do this, I would not advise the use of transfer paper, because there is always danger of soiling the china and of leaving too heavy an outline. A better way (if you must trace the design) is, with a piece of charcoal used by artists, to rub over or blacken the lines of the design on the under side. Enough black will adhere, so that when the design is laid upon the china and drawn over with a sharp hard pencil, the impression will remain upon the surface of the china already prepared. "A better but more tedious way," advised by Charles G. Leland in his "Ceramic Painting," "is to prick the pattern with a large pin on foolscap paper. Lay this perforated paper on the tile, and mark these spots with charcoal, India ink, or some water-color. The dots thus made could be connected with a line of color." Many artists draw the design in water-color with a water-color brush. This will not injure the painting, and need not be erased. But the free-hand drawing is greatly to be preferred.

Select the colors to be used, or rather select those colors that you are certain to use during your present sitting. Your design may require a dozen colors, and

you not be able to use more than three or four during the time you have devoted to the work.

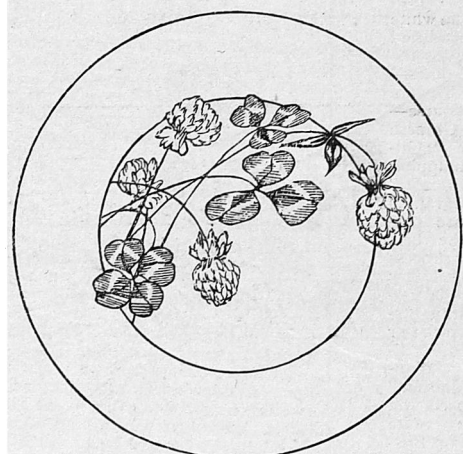
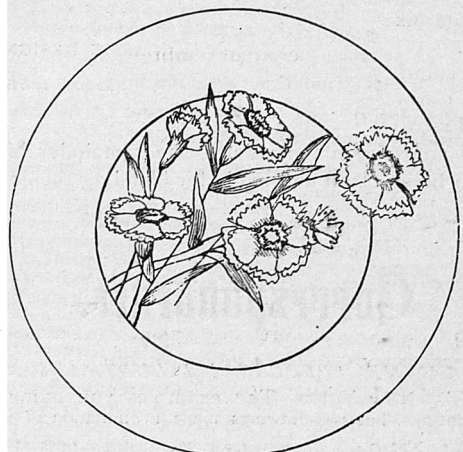
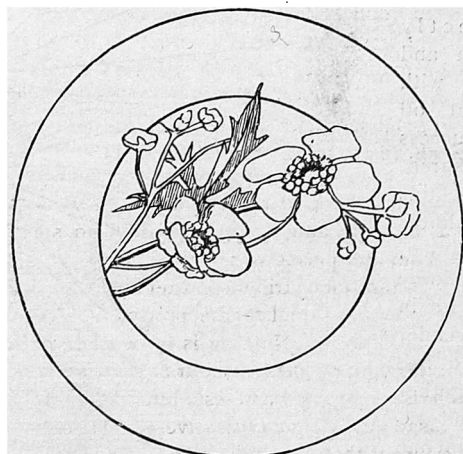
Squeeze upon the glass palette from the tube containing the highest color half as much as you could place upon a silver three-cent piece. Now dip the end of your palette knife into the lavender oil that is poured out, and with it rub the paint squeezed out. Rub it back and forth, turning it over and over with the knife, in as small a place as you can conveniently. Take up with the palette knife about one quarter as much of the flux as you took of the paint from the tube, and mix with the paint. Incorporate the two thoroughly. Repeat this in every case. Some colors are very much improved by the addition of flux.

Capucine red used thinly should always have one



DESIGNS FOR BUTTER-PLATES.

(SEE PAGE 138.)



DESIGNS FOR BUTTER-PLATES.

(SEE PAGE 138.)

the art dealers, or sent for by mail. My present object is to enumerate only those that will give a good range for flower or landscape painting. Others can be added to the list. I will speak first of Lacroix colors, as they are universally used and better known.

Ivory black,
Deep blue,
Deep ultramarine,
Sky blue,
Brown 108,
Brown 4 or 17,
Deep red brown,
Light carmine,
Carmine No. 2,

Grass green No. 5,
Brown green No. 6,
Dark green No. 7,
Pearl gray No. 6,
Yellow ochre,
Purple No. 2,
Crimson lake,
Capucine red,
Light violet of gold,

third of flux mixed with it and a little fat oil instead of turpentine, as the color needs more fire than almost any other.

Flux is a substance which acts on both color and china, causing them to combine. It consists of the same materials as glass—that is, sand, borax, and lead. When it is perfectly smooth and a little thinner than it was when you took it from the tube, scrape it up neatly, every particle of it, and place it in a compact little heap in a clean place on the palette. Then, with a rag dipped in the turpentine, wipe perfectly clean the part of the palette you have used.

Follow these directions with every color upon the palette, taking great care to wipe away every vestige